

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJ: LUCKY TEXTILE COMPANY STRIKE CONTINUES

REF: BANGKOK 12971

1. AFTER THREE WEEKS THE STRIKE AT THE LUCKY TEXTILE PLANT CONTINUES WITH LITTLE HOPE FOR A QUICK SETTLEMENT. TWO LEADERS OF RIVAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNIONS, SANAN WONGSUTHI OF THE TEXTILE WORKERS OF THAILAND AND SAMAN PHIMPHA OF THE SAMUT PRAKAN TEXTILE WORKERS UNION ARE LOCKED IN BATTLE AS SAMAN, WITH LABOR COORDINATION CENTER OF THAILAND BACKING, TRIES TO DISLODGE SANAN'S MORE MODERATE GROUP FROM ITS PRE-EMINENT POSITION.

2. ALTHOUGH ALLIES IN THEIR EARLIER LABOR ACTIVITIES SANAN AND SAMAN ARE NOW POLES APART PHILOSOPHICALLY. SANAN APPRECIATES THE PROBLEMS OF TEXTILE MANAGEMENT DURING THIS PERIOD OF SLACK DEMAND AND FEARS MASSIVE LAYOFFS IF WAGES ARE RAISED. SAMAN WITH HIS LCC AND LEFTIST STUDENT ALLIES IS MORE INTERESTED IN CONFRONTATION AND THE RESULTING DISRUPTION OF INVESTMENT. MANAGEMENT HAS DONE NOTHING TO ALLEVIATE TENSION AS IT HAS REFUSED TO TALK WITH THE STRIKERS

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POINTING OUT THAT IT NEGOTIATED AN AGREEMENT

WITH SANAN'S GROUP ONLY LAST FEBRUARY. THE APPEARANCE OF THANAI BUNNAK AS MANAGEMENT'S ATTORNEY HAS LED TO FURTHER POLARIZATION, SINCE THANAI HAS A COLLECTION OF VICTORIES IN OTHER LCC BACKED STRIKES, INCLUDING BITTER STRIKES AT THE DUSIT THANI HOTEL, STANDARD GARMENT, COLGATE-PALMOLIVE AND HARA GARMENT.

3. THE RIVAL UNION LEADERS HAVE EACH HEADED DELEGATIONS TO VARIOUS RTG OFFICES. THE THAI LABOR CONGRESS (FORMERLY CLUT) HAS SENT NEUTRAL ADVISORS TO THE PLANT AND GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN THE HOPE OF PROMOTING A SETTLEMENT. ON THURSDAY, SEVERAL HUNDRED STRIKERS MARCHED TO THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR PLIGHT. LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS CLAIM THEY ARE HELPLESS UNTIL MANAGEMENT INDICATES A WILLINGNESS TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: THE LUCKY TEXTILE STRIKE IS AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF A THAI LABOR DISPUTE WHERE PERSONALITIES, OUTSIDE SUPPORTERS AND AN INEFFECTIVE AND UNIVERSALLY DISREGARDED LABOR LAW ACT TO FRUSTRATE THE MORE BASIC DESIRES OF THE MAJORITY OF WORKERS WHO WANT TO RETURN TO WORK. MANAGEMENT'S DILEMMA IN FACING COMPETING DEMANDS FROM RIVAL UNIONS IS ALSO APPARENT.

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